



## Interim COVID-19 Guidance Regarding Prevocational Services

April 24, 2020

On March 7 2020, Governor Andrew M. Cuomo declared a state of emergency through [Executive Order 202](#) to respond to the COVID-19 public health emergency. The top priority for the Office for People With Developmental Disabilities (OPWDD) continues to be the health and safety of New Yorkers with intellectual and developmental disabilities, and our state and voluntary workforce. In response to this state of emergency, and to ensure health and safety, OPWDD, in conjunction with the New York State Department of Health, is working to provide flexibility for the delivery of OPWDD 1915(c) Home and Community-Based Waiver services. The following modifications to the service system, in place for the duration of the state of emergency, will allow OPWDD providers to continue to meet the needs of the people they support, to the greatest extent possible.

Administrative Directive Memorandum #2020-01, *Prevocational Services*, remains in force for the duration of the state of emergency, except as temporarily amended by the provisions of this directive.

### Use of Technology

Prevocational Services may temporarily be provided remotely using telehealth. The use of technology to deliver Prevocational Services does not require prior approval. The Prevocational Services provider must:

- Use good clinical judgment to determine that the telehealth encounter is appropriate;
- Verify that the service can be delivered effectively via verbal prompting/cueing only; and
- Ensure the health and safety of the person will continue to be met via this service modality.

In addition, Prevocational Services providers must follow OPWDD's "Interim Guidance Regarding the Use of Telehealth/COVID-19", available at <https://opwdd.ny.gov/coronavirus-guidance/covid-19-guidance-documents>.

### Location of Prevocational Services

The service definition and limits for Prevocational Services are temporarily modified to allow Prevocational Services in the following alternate locations:

- The person's private home;
- The person's family home;
- A provider owned or controlled certified or uncertified residential setting; or
- Any other emergency residential setting, such as a hotel.

Prevocational Services provided in a supervised residence cannot be billed to Medicaid, if the Residential provider is also receiving an enhanced residential rate to reflect the person's day-time staffing needs.

Prevocational Services may be provided in out-of-state locations, if necessary, for the safety of the person. Services provided in another state must be provided in accordance with the waiver service definition and the person's Life Plan, as may be amended to address service needs during the emergency. See section below on *Care Planning and the Update of Life Plans*.

### **Delivering Services and Maintaining Social Distancing**

During the state of emergency, Prevocational Service providers may provide and bill Medicaid for services that support the person, while maintaining social distancing. For example, Prevocational Services staff may deliver groceries or other supplies, or assist with necessary outdoor household chores (such as taking garbage cans to the curb and returning cans to the home). For these types of services, the time that staff spend traveling to the person's home, running the errand, and returning to the worker's home, may be billed as Prevocational Services.

### **Interim Billing Guidance**

There will be no duplication of billing for Prevocational Services and services otherwise rendered in provider-owned or controlled residential settings.

OPWDD issued interim billing guidance to Prevocational Services providers on March 24, 2020, regarding retainer day payments for service dates beginning on March 18, 2020 through March 31, 2020, due to the suspension of these services, effective March 18, 2020. This interim billing guidance was extended for service dates through April 15, 2020. As of the date of this guidance, billing instructions for service dates on or after April 16, 2020 are anticipated to be forthcoming. Check OPWDD's webpage regularly for updates, at <https://opwdd.ny.gov/coronavirus-guidance/covid-19-guidance-documents>.

### **Care Planning and the Update of Life Plans**

A person's current Life Plan and Staff Action Plan(s) remain in place. Prevocational Services providers should ensure that Prevocational Services staff know how to safely serve the person. Formal updates of the Staff Action Plan can occur later. Additional information regarding the timing of Life Plan and Staff Action Plan adjustments will be released in separate guidance.